

**Agenda**

Nov 19, 2012

RecRAC (RAC) Conf Call Meeting

Hosted by the State Office

Monument A/B Conf Rooms

Salt Lake City, UT

RAC members in attendance: LuAnn Adams, Carl Albrecht, Jim Allison, Lowell Braxton, Jim Catlin, John Harja, Bryan Harris, Brian Merrill, James Nelson, Steve Slater, Porter Teegarden, Frank White, Steve Burr, Bill Hopkin

RAC member not in attendance: Ted Zimmerman

BLM employees in attendance: Juan Palma, Aaron Curtis, Trish Clabaugh, Matt Blocker, Sherry Foot, Amy Adams, Anthony Bobo, Sheri Hughes (National Recreation Reservation System (NRRS))

Members of the public: Kitty Benzar, Skip Edwards, Jeff Johnson

Because of this is a conference call meeting, it is being recorded and will be transcribed. All participants were given this message in advance. A copy of the transcribed minutes will be sent to Sherry Foot, Utah State Office RAC Coordinator. Sherry will modify the minutes—no changes will be made on decisions, votes, or positions stated in conversations.

Introductions of RAC members and the public were made.

Election of Officers: This was not mentioned in the *Federal Register* notice, so a call was made at this meeting.

Bill Hopkin: I'd like to re-nominate Lowell Braxton as Chairman.

Carl Albrecht: I'd second that.

All members approved

Nominations for Vice-Chair please.

LuAnn Adams: I'd like to nominate Bill Hopkin.

Jim Catlin: I'll second. This is Jim Catlin.

All members approved.

Time was turned over to Aaron Curtis who thanked Sherry Foot, the RAC members and the Price Field Office staff for coordinating the meeting quickly and within timeframes.

Matt Blocker, Price Field Office, is giving the presentation via powerpoint. The State Office participants are able to view this. The RAC members had received advanced copies of the presentation.

Most of the notes will remain as written.

Matt: So yes, this is the presentation. And this slide is my second trip down Deso and this was Labor Day.

So I will move to the next slide and this is the actual proposal that we're presenting.

So the BLM Price Field Office is requesting the Utah Recreation Resource Advisory Council, the RAC to provide a recommendation on proposed changes to the Permit Reservation System for Desolation in Gray Canyon on the Green River.

The proposal would involve converting the existing first come, first serve call in system to an online lottery system on recreation.gov. The proposed changes would begin in December 1, 2012 and would include the elimination of \$20 reservation fee and a \$10 transaction fee and the adoption of the standard \$6 recreation.gov lottery application fee; kind of a mouthful. And 25 – and the \$25 special recreation permit fee will remain the same.

So I'll start with giving kind of a description of the area for people that have not been down there. It's 84 river miles that cross over four different counties. And it starts up in Uintah County, goes through Carbon, Emery and Grand Counties. It also crosses through three different Field Offices. Start from the Vernal Field Office, goes into Price and into Moab.

And Price is the lead for the whole program.

It's typically a five to seven day trip. It's a suitable wild and scenic river and it goes through BLM's largest wilderness study area in the lower 48 states and it's a national historic landmark.

We annually have 5500 annual visitors. And the mission statement for Desolation Canyon is to we provide an opportunity for a high quality primitive recreation experience for all people now and forever. And that's from the 1979 River Management Plan.

I'll move onto Slide Number 4. And that's just a map for people that aren't familiar with the area.

You have the Sand Wash Ranger Station up north there. And that's where people put in and then they take out down at Swazye's Boat Ramp. And you can see that it's surrounded by wilderness study areas and the Indian Reservation.

Man: According to my map the wilderness study areas are not listed as being in that light brown color but they are definitely the wilderness study areas.

Matt Blocker: Yes. That map that I put together it wasn't the greatest so. It - and I was just trying to demonstrate where the river is and the - that it's surrounded by WSA so hopefully that makes sense.

I'll move onto the next slide. And this describes the facility staff and services that help support the River Program and some - and what the fees pay for.

The Sand Wash Put In includes a boat ramp, campground, bug huts and ranger station and toilets. And then the Swazye Take out includes a concrete boat ramp, developed parking, toilets and trash collection. And some of the staff, seasonal river rangers, recreation assistant that helps take the phone calls and does the reservations. And outdoor recreation planner and then there's management, law enforcement and administrative support as needed.

The services permit and fee administration, launch calendar, management safety and equipment, compliance checks, visitor information and services, some of the stuff that we provide.

Moving onto the next slide, Slide Number 6, fees began in 1983 and they started at \$7.50 per person. They were last raised in 2008 and they are the current \$25 per person. Permit limits were established in the '79 River Management Plan and reaffirmed in the 2008 Resource Management Plan that the Price Field Office did.

The 35,000 is the number of user days per year and a user day is one person on a six day trip equals six user days. So that's kind of our carrying capacity is 35,000 user days per year.

The maximum group size is 25 people per permit or per launch. That's the most you can put on the river and the permits are split between commercial and private boaters.

And any of those permits that are not used by either are made available to the other group if needed so.

Woman: (Unintelligible).

Matt Blocker: What's that?

Steve Burr: So...

Matt Blocker: Do you have a question?

Steve Burr: Yes, question for you Matt. This is Steve Burr. So when you say permits are split is that a 50/50?

Matt Blocker: It's - yes, the '79 plan said that it - we will work towards a 50/50 split of private and commercial even though like Amy said it - that's now how it works out. A lot of the commercial side, those permits aren't used and they're picked up by the private side if they're not used.

Bill Hopkin: Can I ask a question?

Matt Block: You bet.

Bill Hopkin: This is Bill Hopkin. It says maximum group size, 25 people per permit. Is that - I'm not sure what that means.

So do you have more permits on the river all at one time?

Matt Blocker: There's six launches per day during the busy season which is May 15th through August 15th.

Bill Hopkin: It's up 25.

Matt Blocker: I think I describe it.

Amy Adams: It means six launches preferably three commercial, three private. This is Amy with 25 people on each launch. You can have up to 25 people on each launch.

Bill Hopkin: Okay.

Matt Blocker: Yes. And then in the low use there's two launches. And each launch, each permit launch, whatever you want to call it is 25 people, the maximum they can have so.

I'll move onto Slide Number 7. And this just kind of goes into some of the laws with regards to special recreation permits.

The first one is the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, authorizes BLM to manage the use of public land through permits.

The next one is the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act. It authorizes the BLM to acquire special recreation permits and fees associated with specialized recreation use on federal lands and waters such as group activities, recreation events and motorized recreational vehicle use.

And we'll move onto Slide Number 8. And this is from the Code of Federal Regulations. Special recreation permits may be required in special areas based on resource concerns, potential user conflicts and public health and safety. A special area is where the BLM determines that the resource requires special management and control measures for their protection.

So this is relevant to Deso because of the permits for Deso in Gray Canyon protect the primitive recreation experience that people look for when floating down there. The permits protect that primitive experience and it also protects the Riparian Ecosystem and cultural and historical resources which there are numerous cultural and historic resources down in that area.

And I'll move onto Slide 9 which is just a picture that I took when I was going down there so.

And Slide 10. This is a description of the current call in reservation system. And this is just for

the private boaters. Amy will talk about the commercial side in a - after this slide so currently it's a first come, first serve system which rewards most persistent callers. It's basically for those busy days. It's whoever can hit the redial button the fastest and whoever can get up at 8:00 and dial, dial, dial until they reach Amy, until they don't get a busy signal.

And BLM manages that launch calendar. They manage everything that goes into the reservation system. They lead the BLM print and mailed permits receipts and all the stipulations and everything that's involved with the permitting process. This is approximately 420 permits a year. And that can add up to quite a bit of postage mailing and printing out all that stuff.

So the BLM collects and stores permit holder's personal information including credit card numbers, address, phone numbers. That's kind of a security, safety issue having credit card information and addresses and people's personal information collected by us.

The reservation's limited by the staff's availability. They can be taken I believe its 8:00 to noon is what we recommend telling people to call in so it's limited to that timeframe and that time slot.

And those reservations can be available five months in advance.

So I'll move onto the next slide, Slide Number 11. And this describes the fees for the private boaters.

And this is once again for the private boaters. Currently the fees are there's a \$20 reservation fee which you pay that reservation fee if you book a launch over 30 days, 30 days out to hold onto that launch date.

So you pay that. And then also there's a \$10 transaction fee. Each time after you make that original reservation, each time you change or adjust the permit you have to pay that \$10 transaction fee. Say you were going to add a couple people, each time you add people you have to pay that \$10 transaction fee.

And then there is a \$25 per person that we already mentioned, a special recreation permit fee. And you must pay for at least one person 30 days prior to the launch. And if you don't pay before 30 days then that permit is cancelled or made available to anybody else.

And permit holders can add additional passengers up to the day prior to the launch because we need to give the rangers at Sand Wash to check everybody in, the information to tell them how many people are going to be on that permit.

So I'll move to the next slide, Slide Number 12.

And this is more for the private boaters. This is the proposed online reservation system for private boaters.

Recreation.gov is the primary source of online outdoor recreation information and reservations for 12 different federal agencies. Lottery provides equal chance for everybody to get a permit. They can apply anytime from December 1st to January 31st 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They can apply online. So it doesn't if you keep hitting redial or you keep getting a busy signal, it doesn't matter. You have the same chance of getting a permit if you apply December 1st to January 31st so it gives you equal chance there.

And all the fees are paid through recreation.gov online. The BLM does not collect any of that personal information that I talked about before.

And then the boaters print those permits at home. So the postage and the mailing we don't have to do any of that so they handle all that.

Going onto the next slide, Slide 13, more about the online reservation system for the private boaters. Provides more flexibility and time to modify the group sizes.

Online system develops and maintained, no cost to the agency. We - the BLM has not paid anything for this reservation system and software. It's - I've been told it's a pretty expensive software and reservation system. So we have not paid anything for that.

And the recreation.gov already issues approximately 5000 permits on different rivers, on five other rivers. And this kind of increases the consistency with all the other - the rivers that we're dealing with here too.

And the real important thing is that the reservation system is adapted for each river. And what we're basing ours on are the four rivers up in Idaho and where they've had success with it. So that's what we're basing ours on. So and it's - we're just trying to be consistent with the other rivers.

And then the cancelled permits, any permits that are cancelled with the online system they're available. They're put available within 24 hours of that cancellation and they're available first come, first serve after they're cancelled.

So I'll move onto Slide Number 14.

And this describes the fees with the proposed online reservation system. And this again are fees just for the private boaters.

Fees, it's a \$6 application fee. Every time you apply for a permit you have to pay that \$6 fee and that's a standardized recreation.gov fee. Revenues go to recreation.gov.

And they're under contract and those fees won't adjust till 2016 I believe. And it's a typical government contract. Once that expires it'll be up for contract there with somebody else if or whoever.

And the \$25 per person special recreation permit fee will stay the same. And the \$20 reservation fee and \$10 transaction fee will be eliminated with the proposed online system.

And here is some more law here that talks about Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act. The Secretary shall established the minimum number of recreation fees and shall avoid the collection of multiple or layered recreation fees. This just means that the BLM is required to be as fair as possible with their permits and fee collection and everything must be justified with that.

And I'll move onto Slide 15 now. And I'll let Amy talk about this one. And this is more for the commercial boaters.

Amy Adams: Okay. This is for the proposed online reservation system for the commercial boaters. Commercial, river outfitter considerations, there'll be changes to confirmation deadlines for permanent and temporary launches.

Wait a minute. I had to correct myself. There's a - okay, \$6 recreation.gov application fee only applies to temporary launches on the commercial side. They have a set calendar, just a little bit of - related to (unintelligible) yes.

Matt Blocker: Extra.

Amy Adams: A little bit of extra information. Commercial operators have a set permanent calendar. Launches that continue every year. It may be the first Monday in June every year. But they have a set permanent calendar. Those dates will automatically be moved over every year and there is no extra fees for those dates.

They can request temporary launches for their next year and those temporary launches they will be asked to confirm them and they will have to pay the \$6 recreation.gov application fee for the temporary launches.

Okay, the cancellation policy by moving to recreation.gov will be simplified for the commercial operators. Used to be fees were assessed within 44 days. It started 44 days before their launch. They started having to cancel their permits in order not to have cancellation fees.

With this we'll have 21 days if they cancel 21 days before there are no cancellation fees. If they cancel 21 days to -- I'm getting ahead of myself -- to the day of the launch and it does - if it rebooks we don't care. They're off the hook, no problem. If it doesn't rebook they have to pay \$150 cancellation fee.

Permits - launches that they failed to cancel and they failed to show up and launch they do have a \$300 cancellation fee. That is the state it has been other years.

Can we move onto the next slide?

Matt Blocker: You bet. Any questions or anything on any of this so far?

JR Nelson: I'm wondering what your next slide picture was taken. It's beautiful and I want to know where it is.

Matt Blocker: That's the important stuff. That is Sand Wash. That's the Put In right there. That's where everybody camps or puts in so.

Amy Adams: You can see the road to the left side going down to the Sand Wash Boat Ramp.

JR Nelson: The only thing (unintelligible).

((Crosstalk))

Brian Merrill: This is Brain Merrill speaking. That's the least beautiful part of this whole stretch but...

Amy Adams: Yes.

Brian Merrill: ...it just gets better and better with every mile you go down the stream.

Matt Blocker: Thank you Brian. Okay, anything else?

Well I'll move onto Slide Number 17. And this kind of goes into the comparison of the River Program operating costs and revenues.

The labor costs with this online system is estimated at to be reduced by approximately \$37,000. And that's just a guess, an estimate that we won't be taking as many reservations so that's where the labor will be reduced.

The - converting to the online system would also decrease approximately \$15,000 in revenues and that's from the elimination of the transaction fees and the reservation fees. We just guessed that based on the - what was it, 2005 or 2006 was the last time they did a lottery so that was the number of applicants.

And then converting to an online system would reduce total operating costs by approximately \$22,000 in 2013.

And with this, with not having to take so many reservations and being on the phone, 8:00 to noon, BLM would be able to provide greater customer service. The - we'd be able to have a higher quality of the customer service, be able to talk more about the river levels, the water levels, the bugs on the river and stuff like that instead of just taking reservations nonstop so that would probably improve the customer service.

Next slide is this is the Put In that we saw before. This is on a busy day. And I think taken in



May so this is a busy season. And just this is what the river rangers are facing on a busy day.

Moving onto the next slide, Slide 19, this is some of our public outreach efforts. A letter regarding the proposed changes was mailed to all of the 2012 permit holders.

Amy discussed this starting in November, 2011 at the Utah Outfitters Guide Meeting and we did it again this last - at this last meeting in 2012. And then the river rangers have also contacted thousands of users at the boat ramp, at the Put In there during the 2012 season and received positive comments about it.

Moving to the next slide, Slide Number 20, we did a 30 day public comment period for the draft plan for the draft Business Plan for Desolation Gray Canyon of the Green River. Press release was issued to dozens of media outlets and was published on the Associated Press, Salt Lake Tribune, Deseret News, and Price Sun Advocate.

The proposal was highlighted on BLM web sites, Facebook, BLM Facebook and BLM Twitter pages. The proposal was also posted on Mountain Buzz and Utah Rafters, River Runner web sites.

And next slide is how many official comments we received. I was emailed or mailed in comments and we had 35 official comments received. Three of those comments were in favor of recreation dot - switching to recreation.gov, one comment was asking questions about recreation.gov. Twenty-four of those comments were opposed to switching to recreation.gov and there was one form letter with seven different people asking to adjust the proposal.

And moving to the next slide, we'll kind of talk about what some of those comments said. Slide Number 22. These comments were in support of moving to recreation.gov. They said that recreation.gov is easier to use. Lottery process is a fair system because they can - everyone stands the same chance and said it doesn't reward the most persistent caller or whoever can hit redial the fastest so it's in their opinion it's a fair system.

Convenient to pick up cancellation, permitting process is more consistent with other rivers, and online reservation system. It's less frustrating than the current call in system.

And those are the comments that we received in support of recreation - switching to recreation.gov.

Next slide is Slide Number 23. And here are some of the comments that were opposed to switching to recreation.gov. People were afraid of the loss of customer service provided through existing call in system. Mainly they wanted to talk to Amy and they were - they liked Amy's customer service so they were afraid of losing that.

But that's not the case. The customer service will still be provided by both the BLM and recreation.gov staff. And the quality of the service will go up. You'll be able or whoever is taking the call will be able to spend more time talking about the important things on the river like

the bugs or the rapid or the water levels and stuff like that so.

And then another comment opposed to it, online system will eliminate non-Internet boaters. And there - the non-Internet boaters will be able to call both the BLM and recreation.gov staff for reservations.

Some of the other comments, cancellation policy will create more unused launches. Twenty-one days is too short to plan a Deso trip. Current system provides more flexibility to change trip leaders.

And BLM we can adjust and change the trip leaders for people. So that's not true.

And then the 21 day timeframes as I mentioned, we were - we base that off of other rivers having success with recreation.gov and if we're going to be continuing monitoring this and seeing if that is the case that we're not filling all these launches and there's people that want to be on Deso and they're not there we can monitor and see if that is happening. And we can adjust these timeframes to be...

Trish Clabaugh: And this is Trish. I'll just add one quick comment. We can also make that a 30 day if that - there were quite a few comments related to having it 30 days, not 21. So we are not locked into a 21 day...

Matt Blocker: Yes.

Trish Clabaugh: ...at this point.

Matt Blocker: It's a real flexible program and it basically accommodates the river, the specific river however - whatever works best for Desolation is what it's all about so.

Steve Burr: So Matt...

Matt Blocker: Yes.

Steve Burr: ...you show on your second bullet, Steve Burr again, so a non-Internet or the ones makes a reservation, just calls in during business hours.

Woman: Yes.

Steve Burr: So okay. And \$6 fee.

Woman: Yes.

Steve Burr: Okay. So the same.

Woman: Same fees. They can call either (unintelligible).

((Crosstalk))

Steve Burr: And still be able to be a part of the lottery.

Woman: Yes.

Steve Burr: Okay.

Matt Blocker: Everything is the same there. Okay, any other questions? I've got a couple more slides here.

Man: At this point are you all leaning towards 21 - 30 day cancellation period or not (unintelligible).

Amy Adams: The system is set up, this is Amy, for the 21 day cancellation. We can have them change it before December 1st if you feel like we need go to the 30 day or we can monitor it for a year or two and always change it later. It is our system. It is flexible that way. We went with the 21 day to try to stay like the other rivers that are already on the system.

Woman: But we aren't, you know...

Amy Adams: Right.

Woman: ...we're open to suggestions. If there's a strong feeling on that.

Man: Okay. What are those four wheelers up in Idaho?

Woman: (Sherry).

Matt Blocker: That's a good question. I know on the salmon part.

Woman: Main salmon. Yes, (Sherry) do you want to answer that?

(Sherry Hughes): Yes. The four rivers are the four rivers that are still involved in what we call the four rivers lottery. This is (Sherry) Hughes. The Middle Fork, the Middle Fork is the salmon. Main Salmon Wild Section, the Salmon River, Selway and Hells Canyon.

Matt Blocker: Thank you (Sherry). I'll move onto the next slide, Slide Number 24, some more comments opposed to recreation.gov. Recreation.gov is difficult to use and obtain cancelled permits was one of the comments.

And recreation.gov is a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and the cancelled permits, once they're cancelled are made available within 24 hours of the cancellation.

And I'll also mention here that if people - when people get the permits for the lottery, they have till March 15th to pay for a person. And then once - if they do not pay by that date then those permits are made available March 16th and it's a first come, first serve basis at that point. That's just a little note there.

Bill Hopkin: Can I ask a question?

Matt Blocker: You bet.

Bill Hopkin: So if you have a cancellation and you post that, does that mean that whoever picks that up has to use that date and time?

Matt Blocker: Yes. Yes sir.

Woman: Yes.

Matt Blocker: Yes.

Woman: You can't - the dates we're talking about that you can select through the lottery or pick up on the cancellation is the date that your permit, you will need to launch on the river.

Woman: Okay.

Woman: Right.

Matt Blocker: To clear that up. And then another of the comments opposed to it is that keep the money local. I'm afraid that the money was going elsewhere.

And all of the special recreation permit fees, that's the \$25 per person, will continue to be used for the River Program and only can be used for the River Program. And whatever it takes to administrate that program.

And the \$6 application fee maintains the reservation system. That's what recreation.gov and Sherry can correct me on how it's split up.

But they - basically that \$6 maintains the reservation system. Yes.

Brian Merrill: Matt?

Matt Blocker: Yes.

- Brian Merrill: A question. This is Brian Merrill. I can't remember. How much money do they have committed up until that date in March when they have to confirm their reservation? Is it just the \$25?
- Woman: They have only up till the point that they confirm their reservation. They have only committed to \$6.
- Brian Merrill: Oh it's just...
- Woman: And then by March 15th they need to commit at least one person and pay the \$25 for that one person.
- Brian Merrill: Okay.
- Steve Burr: That - this is Steve Burr again. So your second bullet in addition, I mean this is for private. So you still have all the revenue from the commercial companies.
- Matt Blocker: Yes. Yes, and this basically applies to private and commercial.
- Woman: The way it is, is that private side is \$25 per person which does - all of that comes back to our office. On the commercial side it's the \$25 per person plus they also pay us 3% of their total income - their total revenue.
- Matt Blocker: Gross revenue, yes.
- Woman: And all of that comes back to this Price Office.
- Matt Blocker: Yes.
- Porter Teegarden: Can I ask a question? This is Porter. I'm still not clear on if the commercial segment is on its own lottery system or how that's integrated if it is at all.
- Amy Adams: And this is Amy. The commercials don't have a lottery. They have a set calendar year-to-year for their permanent launches.
- Okay each operator has so many permanent launches on Deso. And then we give them the opportunity after August 1st to request temporary launches for the next year. So for 2013 they have requested those starting August of 2012.
- Those temporary launches, they have to pay the \$6 fee for them to recreation.gov. But they do not have to pay them on the permanent launches.
- Lowell Braxton: What is a temporary launch? This is Lowell.

Amy Adams: A temporary launch is just that they want to add - they have somebody call and say we want to go on this date. So they call me and say can I have a launch on May 2nd that they wouldn't normally have. That would be a temporary launch.

And it would only be for that year. The next year they would not have that launch unless they request it...

Man: Hello?

Amy Adams: ...again.

Woman: So...

Man: Hello? This (unintelligible).

Woman: So the commercial outfitter. Or the commercial guide, they have what Amy was saying a set calendar. They already know next year what days that they can market and get clients for their trips.

So then the temporary ones are additional requests that then they have to call and see if they can get launches on those dates.

Does that help?

Man: Yes.

Porter Teegarden: Sort of. The temporary permit so for the commercial, this is Porter again, the temporary permit for the commercial, well how they - are they taking priority over the public?

Amy Adams: No. We explained to you. Our calendar we try to maintain it so we have the launches are split evenly between them. There would be three commercial launches available each day and three private launches available each day.

So when they call in to request their temporary launches or they ask for those temporary launches they cannot exceed that. They can't have a fourth or fifth launch on a day. It's only those three.

The reason we have those empty, not every day is filled with the three commercial launches every single day. So there are still days available that they can request the temporary ones.

Brian Merrill: Amy if I can add, this is Brian Merrill again. And we are an outfitter in Desolation.

Just, like Amy said, if you look at the calendar on any given day there are some dates where there's a launch available.

And sometimes an outfitter will have a group that wants to go during that timeframe. So they'll pick up a launch that isn't normally part of their set configuration.

We do that every once in a while in early May for example to fit into our training schedule. We'll pick up a launch just for training guides or something like that.

But more commonly we're actually turning back some of our launches that are permanent launches because they just don't fit into our schedule or we, you know, we didn't get bookings and it doesn't look like we're going to get bookings so we turn them back.

And one of the unique things about Desolation is it's one of the rivers in the country where the commercial allocation doesn't get used as heavily as it does on a lot of other rivers.

And so a lot of those commercial launches do end up going to private individuals eventually and they, you know, they're able to take advantage of that.

Amy Adams: That's right. The majority of the launches on Deso would be private launches because anything that's not picked up by the commercial we release on the private side.

And anything not confirmed as of March 15th, on March 16th will go back into a shared pool. Those are commercial and private launches. They go into a shared pool and anyone can pick them up be it commercial or private.

Matt Blocker: Yes. We average approximately 70% private and 30% commercial so if that helps.

Man: Yes. So more and more private than commercial.

Matt Blocker: Yes. Because they pick up those permits that have been cancelled by the commercial side.

Man: Here's an off the wall question for you. So I'm private. I've made no reservations.

Could I go to Sand Wash and hang out and if there's a cancellation get it?  
Can't, right?

Amy Adams: You would have to contact recreation.gov or my self, this is Amy, in order to put on. The rangers cannot just allow you to walk up and get a permit.

Man: Okay.

Amy Adams: But that's the same as it is now. So whether we convert to recreation.gov...

Woman: Right.

Amy Adams: ...or not, there's still not the ability to go to Sand Wash and get a permit that day.

Man: Yes.

Man: Yes.

Woman: Yes. The thing with recreation...

((Crosstalk))

Man: (Unintelligible).

Woman: ...well they could call the office. The thing with recreation.gov, with your cell phone there is cell phone coverage just above Sand Wash. If you got out there and they said yes, there's a launch available, you could technically drive back up to the boat - to the airport, landing strip, dial into recreation.gov and book your launch. You could technically do that.

Man: So you could take a risk and not get a launch.

Woman: Yes. Most people are not going to drive to...

Woman: Drive all that way.

Woman: ...Desolation to see if they get - to get on.

Woman: Yes.

Woman: Because it's a three hour drive once you leave pavement.

Man: Couldn't I sneak on the river at midnight?

Woman: Well it happens.

Matt Blocker: No, no.

Woman: So we'll meet you on the other end.



Matt Blocker: We've got river rangers.

Man: (Unintelligible).

Man: (Unintelligible) with handcuffs on.

Woman: Exactly.

Matt Blocker: Dedicated river rangers.

Woman: (Unintelligible).

Man: (Unintelligible).

Matt Blocker: Okay. So I guess we were talking about concerns about future recreation.gov fee increases. There was concerns about that.

And the fees for recreation.gov like I said before are set by a government contract. And that contract will be good through 2016. And it's lower than the current reservation fees.

So yes, that will be in place. And will not be adjusted till 2016 and we don't even know if it will be adjusted. And it'll be awarded in the government contract process.

Then there's concerns about loss of revenue. Will prevent balanced budget. And that we actually anticipate the online system would provide BLM of approximately \$22,000 in program cost savings.

And the last point is that recreation.gov like we've said before all along here that this system can be adaptive for Deso in Gray Canyon. So it can - we can adjust this if we need to as we monitor and see how things go.

Next slide is Slide Number 25, and more about the comments. This was the comments from the form letter that seven people sent our way. They just talked about adjustments.

And these are the adjustments. The final payment of fees for number of people, they think it should be adjusted to 30 days prior instead of 7 days. And no adding participants after 30 days they suggested and cancellation deadline for a full refund should be 30 days instead of 21 days.

And then finally this - yes, you got a question on that?

Man: Just go back one.

Matt Blocker: You bet.

Man: So you got the bullets there. What was their rationale for adjustments?

Matt Blocker: Their rationale was - I think their rationale was that they're afraid that people and this is strictly private side of things. That people would pay the \$31 to grab that permit, get that launch and then they'll sit on it. And in seven days - oh and also the seven days is way too short to plan a trip for Deso for a seven day trip and then also the \$31 wasn't enough of an incentive to - because they could just drop that permit so.

That's the suggestions that they made to adjust this proposal.

Woman: So Matt where are we at now? And are we at 30 days now?

Woman: Let me give you a little bit of clarification. What we do right now, I don't mean to be too wordy, the way it's set up right now they book the launch through a call in system five months in advance. Thirty days before they launch on the private side they have to call in and make payment for people.

They can pay for some and add more later, that's not a problem but they have to pay for at least one person at that time.

We have a no refund's policy on Desolation. And because this is special use we've been allowed to do that. So anything they pay after that missed reservation if their trip falls apart, they're just out their money unless they can transfer it to some - another trip leader or cancel it or move it later in the year.

What we're proposing to do is change it so they have to confirm a reservation by March 15th and pay for at least one person. Then they have up to seven days before their trip to pay for all the rest of their people. If it happens that they add people so they put ten in and then they somebody can't go, it's 21 days before if they want to go into the system, they can take that money back and cancel their permit.

We've locked it down from 21 days to lay of launch that they can no longer get their money back but they can continue to add people to the trip. So they can wait until that seven day point to pay for the rest of their people and only have committed one person up till then.

Woman: So that's why people are commenting they would rather have it 30 days.

Woman: Yes. There are some concern that with 21 days for other people to pick up the launch, it's not enough planning time to put a trip, seven day long trip together for Desolation.

So we have received some comments to keep it at that 30 day cancellation rather than move to the 21. We moved it to the 21 to stay the same as the other rivers to give the boater the continuity.

But it can be adjustable for Deso.

Matt Blocker: Yes, yes. If we - that's the big take home is if we see that it's not working for 20 days and we need to move it to 30 days we can adjust that.

Woman: Well we can decide today too.

Lowell Braxton: This is Lowell. What kind of feedback do you get from Idaho when you ask them about the success of that 21 days?

Woman: That would be (unintelligible).

((Crosstalk))

Matt Blocker: (Sherry) will probably answer that one better.

Woman: Well there's a different reservation (unintelligible).

Woman: They do have penalties for not canceling and then not showing up on those rivers. And we don't have penalties.

Man: Right.

(Sherry Hughes): Yes, the belief is that 21 days, this is (Sherry Hughes) again, all the four rivers have the same 21 days. And we talked a little bit about, you know, whether they should switch or change.

I don't know of any river that's more complex to try and put together a trip for them than the Middle Fork or the Selway.

And, you know, the thought for most people was that 21 days was a nice kind of compromise between knowing what your water levels are going to be, and still having enough time to plan a trip.

So that's where the 21 days came from. And to be honest almost every river I know of is blocked into the 21 days with the exception of Grand Canyon and Desolation. Yes, because 21 days when you're dealing with a free flowing river and that is kind of key also in the Idaho situation, with the exception of Hells Canyon, you don't know what your high water is going to be. You don't know what your low water is going to be.

We wanted to give folks, you know, that time where it was close enough to it. You know you don't want to a date back if something is going to change. But also have enough time that someone could put - pick that cancellation up and do a trip.

And I've had several people from back East say 21 days, if we know about it at 21 days, that's

plenty of time to put a trip together.

Matt Blocker: Good, thank you (Sherry). Any other comments? I think I've got one more slide so.

(Brian): Yes. I mean is it better to comment as we're going along here or just save all my comments?

Matt Blocker: Yes. Whatever works best for you (Brian).

(Brian): Thanks. I mean my thought on that is I would be more comfortable with the 30 days as well. I know the 21 seems to be working in Idaho.

Part of the reason is and I will cite the same justification for when I sum up, the lobbying for a little higher fees all the way around, a larger commitment for people financially upfront is that Desolation tends to be a fall back reservation. I know a lot of groups that every year get together and they put in for the four rivers in Idaho. They put in for Grand Canyon on a lottery and they put in for Desolation.

And then the logic is if we don't get any of these other rivers which are much more difficult to get because there's a lot more people who apply we can always go on Desolation.

And so if we make it inexpensive for them and easy and an easy timeframe for them, they'll just take advantage of it. They might just sit on it, you know, and but if it's more of a commitment upfront than maybe we have more serious people who really just want to do Desolation, you know, applying.

But anyway but that's my main logic for why I would be more comfortable with 30 days. I know it's not the same as the other ones but I think Desolation is a little different in that we're just going to have people who are just speculating much more so than you get in Grand Canyon on the four rivers in Idaho so.

Woman: Also as a commercial operator you have 30 days for that launch to rebook if you've cancelled it versus only 21 days. You know because if it doesn't rebook in the 21 days then you have to pay a penalty on it.

(Brian): Yes.

Matt Blocker: And we've got a pretty nice river here too I'd say.

All right, I'll move onto this next slide and this is just kind of a summary of everything. The – refreshing the proposal. This is the proposal again that we're requesting the Utah Recreation RAC to provide recommendation on proposed changes to the permit reservation system for Desolation and Gray Canyon of the Green River. The proposal will involve converting to the existing first come, first serve call in system to an online lottery system on recreation.gov.

Proposed changes will begin on December 1, 2012 and includes the elimination of a \$20 reservation fee and a \$10 transaction fee and adoption of the standard \$6 recreation.gov lottery application fee.

And then final picture of Deso and is any questions or comments?

Juan Palma: At this point, just to make sure. This is Juan. Just to make sure I got the financials right, so we're going from \$30 currently right now that people have to pay, private sector, to just \$6.

Woman: Twenty dollar reservation down to the \$6...

Juan Palma: Right.

Woman: ...application fee.

Matt Blocker: Yes.

Juan Palma: And but the \$25 fee remains in place.

Woman: Yes.

Matt Blocker: Yes, yes. That stays.

Juan Palma: So you're really getting a better deal.

Matt Blocker: Yes. Yes, the private side I believe will be cheaper.

Juan Palma: But it sounds to me like what I'm hearing is that even with this reduction in funding we would be okay from a BLM. We would be - our operating expenses will be covered by what is (left).

Matt Blocker: Yes. Yes, it will be.

Juan Palma: Okay.

Steve Burr: So this is Steve Burr again. This is kind of unusual for recreational law because normally we deal with proposals for fee increases.

Woman: Increases, yes.

Steve Burr: And this is actually represents a decrease to private boaters.

Woman: Yes.

Lowell Braxton: This is Lowell. I was going to say about the same thing. And I also think it's commendable that this will free up some other BLM staff time to do other things.

So I think it's a use of technology that's entirely appropriate.

Juan Palma: Yes. It sounds to me like right now, this is Juan, its very labor intensive for the BLM to take all this thousands of phone calls and we would not deal - and it sounds to me like we wouldn't deal with that at all. I mean we would (unintelligible).

((Crosstalk))

Woman: No. And we would not be dealing with any personal information like credit cards, addresses. That will all be on recreation.gov.

Woman: Right. But our - the Price field and local phone number will still be on for any specific - site specific questions, it will be on the recreation.gov page to call.

Carl Albrecht: This is Carl Albrecht. Brian did I understand that you are an outfitter?

Brian Merrill: Yes.

Carl Albrecht: So what your thoughts?

Brian Merrill: Well I - from the outfitting side of things I'm - I think this will be just fine. And I called several friends up in Idaho to see what their experience had been with using rec.gov and across the board it was positive. Didn't really have any concerns.

And so then I called a bunch of people who I know who regularly use the system for private permits up there. And got their input.

And I had everything from I hate it to it works just fine to its really great, you know. Mostly positive feedback.

And, you know, I've gotten out and looked at some of these web sites, you know, people who are rec.gov haters for sure. And they seem to be mostly people who are reserving campsites. So most of the complaints seem to be about that.

But with regard to these multi-day rafting trips, most people seem - that I talk to I mean, you know, I'm not a - it wasn't a scientific survey. It was five people.

But the only one who really complained about it is one who I know is pretty much a

technophobe. He doesn't like to get on the Internet for anything let alone to book a river trip. And if they have the option of not having to do that and call in, I think that's a positive thing.

I - one of the concerns that I've heard raised is the loss of customer service. You know people are able to call up and talk with Amy and get a lot of information. And it's my understanding that they still will be able to do that.

I'm wondering if - I know there are also people with rec.gov they can call and talk to. The feedback I got on that was mixed. You know the rec.gov people have no clue what they're talking about with regard to the Salmon River. And the rec.gov person was really pretty helpful you know. So it was really mixed.

I would prefer if I was private user to get to call the Price BLM Office. I'm wondering if rec.gov gives them that phone number, you know, and when they're booking their permit does it automatically say if you have questions you can call rec.gov or you can call Amy Adams in Price, Utah. I don't know if it does or not.

But and I don't know whether if that's a desirable thing. It would be desirable for me if I was a private person booking the trip and had questions specific about the river stretch so.

Man: So...

Woman: (Sherry). Will you answer that question (Sherry)?

(Sherry Hughes): Yes. This is (Sherry Hughes) again. It's set up however the agency wants it to be set up.

Most of them do want their phone number both on the web site under the facility description and also gives the call center agents the phone number to give if folks do have complex questions. You know we know that the call center folks are not going to be able to describe water levels on July 15th on Deso Gray.

So if they run into - if the call progresses beyond the actual reservation activity and if they start to ask some of those more complex questions then the agents will just, you know, give the customer the phone number and tell them to redirect to the actual district office or the program management site. And ask for someone who knows what they're talking about.

Man: This is...

Brian Merrill: So overall just to finish my answer to that question I - you know I'm ready to make a positive recommendation that this should be adopted. I do think, you know, with some minor tweaks mostly having to do with I think the upfront commitment of money ought to be a little higher.

And I don't wish higher fees on anybody but I think it just and make sure we've got serious

people wanting the permit and I think the cancellations should be back at that 30 day period.

And, you know, losing a total of \$31, the \$6 fee and a \$25 fee, you know, and you get to sit on it all the way till 21 days is not that big of a deal for most people.

John Harja: This is John Harja. I got a question. I've been a user of these systems for 40 plus years. And I have my own thoughts.

But what is Dinosaur and Canyonland's National Park Service going to do?  
Do they plan to switch to the recreation.gov?

Woman: I think (Sherry Hughes) can answer that.

(Sherry Hughes): Well - sorry.

Brian Merrill: And I can speak to Canyonlands because we just discussed that in a meeting a couple of weeks ago.

They have chosen not to (direct) rec.gov. They're choosing to custom design their own system with an in-house guy they have. And I honestly think it's unrealistic.

My company developed a reservation system that we resell to our industry. And it took us - well it's still being developed. We started it six years ago. We - people are using it.

But they have an idea they're going to develop their own system in about a month and a half. It'll be ready by the end of...

Man: Yes, right.

Brian Merrill: It'll be ready sometime mid-January and with one guy doing it, it's just not going to happen but, you know.

John Harja: Right. Well the reason I ask is Dinosaur of course has a very similar lottery intensive system. And I think it's a 30 day cancellation period. And yet they're - as far as I know they're proposing to keep on doing that at whatever cost it takes.

Do we have any clue?

(Sherry Hughes): (Sherry Hughes). I have gotten a call from Dinosaur. I will tell you that.

John Harja: And are they interested in shifting or what?

(Sherry Hughes): They are interested. They are looking at, you know, they asked me several questions. And I sent them some information.



And I'm expecting to hear back from them yeah or nay in the next few weeks.

John Harja: Well that's good to hear. I mean my own views are I hate the system recreation.gov from just a user viewpoint. It's difficult. It's hard to understand.

But I also see in today's world that it's the only way you can go. I mean its simplifying things through that kind of process and the associated cost savings are absolutely essential.

Trish Clabaugh: Hey Brian this Trish Clabaugh, a Field Manager. And I'd like to respond to your two suggestions.

And the one was to go to a 30 day cancellation.

Brian Merrill: Yes.

Trish Clabaugh: And I think, you know, I think from my standpoint we're good with that. If that works out and that's easier for everybody I'm good with that.

For your second comment that we should raise fees to make it more of a commitment for the trip, we talked about that actually when this proposal was - the business plan was being revised.

And I guess, you know, the concern with that is it raises a whole another level of issues. And you really need to do a pretty detailed economic analysis of what is the right amount, what is it \$40, \$50, \$100?

And so we didn't want to complicate that at this point and I'm not sure. You know this program is one of the few I would say government wide that runs itself. So at this point I think if we convert to rec.gov we can do an analysis in a couple years and see at that time maybe it is warranted to raise fees.

But I think at this point we're doing pretty well.

Juan Palma: Trish and Brian, I mean this is Juan. And perhaps I misunderstood because I understood it differently.

Man: Yes, me too.

Juan Palma: And that was probably...

Trish Clabaugh: All right.

Juan Palma: ...just my misunderstanding perhaps and let me clarify it. What I understood was that the proponent being able to pay for one person...

Man: Right.

Juan Palma: ...wasn't enough to get in the game. But if they were to pay for two or three or four or five, whatever the number is...

Man: Pay \$100.

Juan Palma: ...they would have more skin in the game. You know and plus as you know, I've got seven people that would say hey you've got to pay for three up right now. That's a little bit more skin in the game there. Not so much I think fee increase but just more, paying for more up front.

Is that what you meant?

Brian Merrill: Yes. That's exactly what I meant so.

Trish Clabaugh: Okay. Sorry for the confusion. We did have a couple comment letters that suggested we go to \$100 a person.

Man: Well that's too high.

Trish Clabaugh: Yes. So anyway sorry for the confusion there then.

Amy Adams: You're talking more, this is Amy, more along the lines of them having to pay for two or four people instead of one.

Trish Clabaugh: When they confirm by March 15th rather than just one.

Brian Merrill: Yes. I guess just the idea that yes, I think, you know, they'll be putting a little more money out there that, you know, is at risk if they forget to cancel or whatever, you know, and...

Woman: Right.

John Harja: Hey on the other hand, I have gone down there by myself so it's not the...

Woman: Exactly.

Brian Merrill: Well yes, that's - I just thought of that. I thought well yes, what if you just have a couple, you know (unintelligible).

((Crosstalk))

John Harja: Yes. I've been down there many times by myself and others. I've seen others so.

Brian Merrill: Right. Yes, it'd have to go up.

Man: Half the fee, something.

(Sherry Hughes): Excuse me. This is (Sherry Hughes). That's why we usually design those in places that will allow solo trips. We usually - that is the minimum because that...

Brian Merrill: Okay.

(Sherry Hughes): ...allows that solo trip to actually occur. If we were to bump that up Brian then we'd have to figure out a way to either give them their money back when the trip occurs.

Brian Merrill: Right.

(Sherry Hughes): (Get) one person. Or, you know, you'd have to gyrate to accommodate those solo trips.

Brian Merrill: Yes. Well that's a good point and...

Steve Burr: This is Steve Burr again. Kind of related to this and let's see Erin and Matt and other BLM folks, we had a pre-briefing conference call on this last Thursday.

And, you know, one of the things Matt in your Slide 24 you say recreation.gov can be adaptive to Deso Gray.

That, you know, we could see how this works for this upcoming season. Hopefully BLM staff, river rangers, folks at the Put In, you know, Amy on the phone, collecting information from the users about, you know, how is this working and we could come back and fine tune, tweak the thing, right?

Matt Blocker: Exactly. That's the important part is being able to adapt this thing. And we will be constantly monitoring to see how things either from Amy's side or river rangers or my side to see what's going on, making sure those launches are being filled and people that want to go down Deso are getting the chance and opportunity to go down Deso so.

Steve Burr: So I mean, you know, you can come back last year and say, yes, we've - you know how ever many people they put in the for reservation they have to pay 25 bucks upfront because we had all these last minute cancellations and we weren't able to, you know, fill the launches.

Matt Blocker: Yes. We can adapt that as needed.

Any other questions out there or comments or concerns?

Sherry Foot: (Unintelligible) okay, I'm hearing none. Are there members of the public that are on the call that would like to make comments or have questions outside of the BLMers and the RAC?

(Kitty Benzar): Yes.

Sherry Foot: Okay, could you identify yourself please?

(Kitty Benzar): (Kitty Benzar).

Sherry Foot: Okay (Kitty), go ahead.

(Kitty Benzar): Okay. I just want to express that my primary concern with recreation.gov is that is part of a larger picture which is a move on the part of all the Federal Land Management Agencies toward privatization and commercialization of our public lands. It's a company that is setting up a business model where they will act as the portal, the Gateway between Americans and access to their public lands and will make, you know, make their profit on the transaction fees involved in facilitating that access.

A little bit of history, the original contract for the reservation system was awarded I think it was 2003 or 2004 to Ticketmaster which was a division of a huge corporation called IAC which does everything from the Home Shopping Network to The Daily Beast to TripAdvisor.com. They split Ticketmaster up into a Ticket Section and a Reserve America Section. They then sold the Reserve America Section to the Active Network, another big multinational corporation with offices all over the world. Some of the Reserve America support does come out of Canada.

And now the Active Network which currently owns and operates recreation.gov may be in financial collapse. The financial news this month is that they may have been (gaming) their accounting. One analyst says that they are functionally insolvent. They've been downgraded. There's a large law firm shopping for plaintiffs to join in a class action suit against them.

And so the BLM, the Forest Service, all of the agencies that use them have found themselves in the position that they are somewhat at the mercy of what might be the potential, you know, Enron of the reservation - the recreation reservation system.

Active Network has a history of doing their call centers in low wage markets such as Tennessee. There's absolutely nothing to keep them from moving their call center for reservations for Deso Gray to Bangladesh if they want to.

So the Forest Service, the BLM have no control over where they provide their services.

So I'm concerned about this move toward privatization and commercialization and moving the control away from the local office there in Price and into this wider world where it's going to be very hard for the agency to control what factors might be at influence there.

I like the fact that the reservation agency was staying right there in Price to support the River Program. I'm not sure why it's an advantage for the money that people pay for access to this river to be paid to a multinational rather than to be paid to the Price River Program. I just thought that was a much more positive way to do it and much better accepted. I can think of a lot of ways for making Amy's job more efficient, make her more productive without having to turn the whole thing over to this large outside agency that is a part of a much larger picture.

I forget who it was. Was it - somebody said they talked to some boaters in Idaho. And I talk to boaters in Idaho too and there's dismay in many sectors in Idaho over the fact that their favorite rivers, their backyard rivers are now under recreation.gov. There's a lot of pushback to recreation.gov as some of you may have seen. There's whole web sites devoted to b\*\*\*\*ing about recreation.gov.

And yes, a lot of that b\*\*\*\*ing is about campgrounds but that's also a big part of their business. They're getting into permits and its kind of late in the game. You may see more of that in relation to permits in the future.

So anyway it is not a universally loved or embraced system. And I would just caution you to think, think long and hard before you outsource something that's being done pretty well right there in Price and outsource to who knows where and who knows to whom. Thank you.

Sherry Foot: Thanks (Kitty). Well Lowell I'll turn the time over to you to continue with the public comment please.

Lowell Braxton: Okay. Is there anybody else that would like to comment on this?

Brian Merrill: This is Brian Merrill from (unintelligible).

((Crosstalk))

(Skip Edwards): Yes, can you hear me? I don't know if I had it on mute or not.

Brian Merrill: Oh.

(Skip Edwards): Hello?

Man: Yes.

(Skip Edwards): Yes. This is (Skip Edwards). I'd like to make a comment on behalf of the public if I might.

Matt Blocker: You bet.

Sherry Foot: Go ahead.

(Skip Edwards): Oh okay, thank you. I didn't know if you...

Sherry Foot: Sure.

(Skip Edwards): ...could hear me or not. You know I think in this whole discussion and listen again, it was very informative. And I'm totally elated at the idea that I believe that people in the Price Office and maybe - and probably as far as the State Office are really looking at this as a more efficient way to do a better job for river runners and people out on the public lands.

But at the same time, I'm going to go back with the former comment or (Kitty Benzar), I think we forget and we're looking at this new role of technology that these are public lands right now. And we're getting further and further away in all aspects of our government and having actual government people on the ground, people that are hired by the taxpayer to do jobs and provide services and going more and more to contractors that (sells) everything from our military system to people checking - doing environmental studies on the public land for the BLM and for other managing agencies.

A statement was made that the Forest Service is going more to this program and I'd like to remind people that the Forest Service yes, is going to it and almost all Forest Service campgrounds now are run by contractors. We have National Parks that are run basically with all the public - direct public services more and more run by contractors, etcetera.

And I question whether this is more efficient either monetarily or better for the public. A business is in a business to make a profit. So to say that this costs nothing, I don't know what the economics were of these studies but somebody is going to make money and it's definitely going to go to someone else before it comes back to the - to our land agencies.

And the other idea is going further out with how we design programs to fit particular rivers. Not every river. Just because there's a river and it might be a Class 3-4 or a Class 1-2 or a Class 5-6. They're not - every river is different. And it needs to be managed differently. And the best way to do that is to manage it with public employees, government employees that have been around, that know the river.

And I'd like - and I know Amy Adams quite well. And I look at heading on out and getting further and further away from Amy and her personalized approach to helping people out on the river. Yes, it sounds good for today and tomorrow and maybe next year. But how these contracts are going to run into the future, I don't know.

And I'll say from I think it was 9, 10, 11 years at Desolation Canyon and a bunch of other years at (West Order) and the Gunnison Gore, etcetera, etcetera, as a river ranger, over and again I

heard nothing but good comments about the service that Amy provided to people.

And now you're saying that this is going to be better, that she's going to be able to do a better job, I don't know. I don't sit at Amy's desk. I know she's quite busy, the few times that I was able to really observe her.

But it seems to me that with the fee system coming in that our agency should be able to provide the number of people there to do the job that the public expects.

And I think that we're letting down the public by thinking this rev or recreation.gov is going to be able to do that job better.

I don't know of anybody that's ever tried to go online to rectify some credit card problem, etcetera, etcetera that's been real happy with the phone waits and who you get to talk to if anybody and nobody seems to know who's in charge.

And I, you know, I'm just I'm totally appalled that we - that Desolation Canyon would even consider going to this system. I think it can certainly be worked out within the office. It's a well managed program. It's had good managers in the past. A lot of those people on the ground are still there including Amy.

And I think we need to reconsider. Also from a management standpoint if things need to be tweaked, they can be tweaked right there in the office. We started with the lottery program way back when and we all sat there and I've been part of that where we in pre-season, throwing pieces of paper around and trying to figure this out. And now we went to another system where you could just call in for space available.

And now we're going to back to this same old thing because somebody thinks it's going to be an easier system and we all want to be lumped into the same government contractor.

And the way those guys make money is by getting more and more of our agencies to and I want to say sucker into the fact that they think they're going to be able to do the job better.

And I think all that comes out of further upstream, Washington, number one.

And but I don't know. I've been away for a couple years now. But I learned a lot. I'm really happy that it sounds like you're trying to do a good job for the public but I would certainly rethink all of this and keep it in-house and take pride in the program that's been developed at Desolation Canyon over the years.

And that would be the end of my comment.

Lowell Braxton: Thanks (Skip). Any other members of the public that want to weigh-in?

(Jeff Johnson): Certainly. My name is (Jeff Johnson). I'm a private rafter. And I'm obviously located in Las Vegas, Nevada.

I submitted a comment letter to BLM regarding the proposal. I think that it's admirable in what they're trying to do. I think it is the direction in the right - it is taking steps in the right direction.

My concern is with the cancellation policy. The current cancellation policy deals roughly all fees are due 30 days out.

And the advantage of the 30 days out is that anybody that was unsuccessful in the initial draw had 30 days to put together a trip, pay the fees and get on the river.

And I think the statistics on the cancellations were relatively high somewhere in the order of probably 30%, 40% cancellation rate.

It definitely afforded everybody an equal opportunity to get on the river that week because I know personally having been rafting Desolation Canyon for over 35 years, we've been very fortunate to pick up as many cancelled permits as we have been lucky in the initial lottery each year.

The concern I have is that moving the period to just on March 15th, all fees being due but only - the only payment that's due is for one person. That's only \$25.

And then when you continue that down you can manipulate the system so that additional fees beyond the one person are not due until seven days prior to the launch date. That's a serious concern that a group of folks say applying for, you know, you're just trying to get - you got 10 or 15 people trying to go for just one trip and just one trip a year and you have 15 people applying and 5 people get it out of those 15. Then they can just indefinitely just hang onto the permit right up until seven days in advance at a fee for just \$25.

I think it disadvantages, it dis-incentivizes the ability to cancel the permit and there's no financial restrictions or consequence to it. Unlike on the private - unlike on the commercial side, the commercial side does a very good job in being right upfront about the fees. Says if you don't cancel it till I think for 25 or 30 days out it's a \$150 fee.

And I think that the other permit systems on the other river systems has demonstrated the value of an initial fee, something much greater than \$25. I know for the Lodore Canyon I think it's a \$125 permit fee that's due. In Grand Canyon if you have a small permit you have to pay - its \$200. On the large permit its \$400. In Grand Canyon it's a 90 days out, no refund, cancellation.

And I know for Lodore Canyon which is just upstream it's, you know, it's a similar process.

So I think what you're trying to do is admirable. I think it's the right thing to do to move to the system online. I think it saves - they save staff time. But I think with the fees that are being imposed it actually detracts and does not meet the objectives of the management plan.



It actually incentivizes people who are just local, who can take advantage of it and try to pick up a permit because you're only two hours from the Put In or two - or just a few hours from the Take Out.

And me being from Las Vegas, you know, it's a day and a half drive up for me. And I think I'd like to see the maximum - the ability to take advantage of the permits. And you need to have a fee imposed much larger than it is now and leave the current cancellation at 30 days out and all fees due 30 days out.

Thank you. I appreciate your time.

Lowell Braxton: Thank you for that. Somebody else from the public that needs to weigh-in?

Hearing none, I think its back to the RAC room. Do we want to do recommendations to proceed or modifications to the plan?

I leave up to the members to make a motion in that direction.

Brian Merrill: I guess everybody is still on the call, right. This is Brian Merrill again. You know if you get - I mean I don't know what to make of this, you know, the data that - the information (Kitty) sent around saying that rec.gov is about ready to go under and you know what I mean.

I'm assuming it wouldn't be a big deal to go back to the old system if they did, you know. Three years into this, rec.gov go out of business. It seems like it's pretty easy to go back to the old system. There's no...

Woman: Yes. We could always go back to the old system.

Matt Blocker: Yes, sure.

Amy Adams: This is Amy. If we do this for two years and decide it's not working for us we can go back to the old system. There's no cost to start it. There's no cost to quit it.

Brian Merrill: Yes. I personally think it's, you know, as much as I, you know, I guess I can sympathize with the comments about the privatization of things. You know I happen to be a commercial operator on public land. And so I've been accused of some of these same things of being an evil empire taking, you know, 300 people down the river every year in Desolation Canyon. Somehow I'm right up there with Microsoft.

But, you know, so...

Man: You wish you were.

Brian Merrill: What's that?

Man: I said I bet you wish you were from an income point of view.

Brian Merrill: Yes. You know and I don't want to minimize that sentiment at all because I share some of those feelings sometimes and (Skip)'s a friend. And I don't want to minimize those feelings at all. That sounded a little harsh but sometimes I feel like the anti-commercial bias is a little misguided at least in terms of the outfitters.

But I - as a member of the RAC I would make a motion that we approve the adoption of rec.gov for the management of permits in Desolation Canyon with the modification that the cancellation period be moved back to 30 days from 21 days. I would hold the modification in terms of the amount of fees.

But I would, you know, like to encourage that this monitoring go on and if it looks like we need to increase the upfront fees sooner than later that it should happen. So I don't know if that's too complicated of a motion but...

Lowell Braxton: And were you - essentially your motion was to approve the plan as proposed with the exception of moving back to 30 days on cancellations. Am I correct on that?

Brian Merrill: Correct.

Lowell Braxton: Discussion on the motion.

Jim Allison: I'd like to discuss a little bit more the fee and paying the fees earlier. This is Jim Allison.

I just wonder if it wouldn't be possible to say that, you know, \$150 are due upfront or something like that.

And if it happens to be a one person or two person trip maybe it's the total cost if it's under \$150 and if it's a bigger trip then up to \$150 something. Not too complicated but enough to take away that incentive to just hang onto the permit till the last minute and then drop it.

Is that possible? I mean is there any reason why something like that couldn't work?

John Harja: You know I've been out there a lot. And this is John Harja. Desolation is always seen as a, I think Brian mentioned it, is seen as a back up trip. And have had incredible success over the years picking up cancellations.

It is kind of frustrating to have to watch the government try to fix something that isn't broken

here.

But if you want to charge \$150 and that's what the Park Service does at Dinosaur. They just \$185 for the permit period. You know pick what you want. Either it's \$25 a person and you have one person or you charge \$185 for a permit like Dinosaur does.

JR Nelson: This is JR Nelson. I think I have a point of order. Are we discussing something that hasn't had a second?

Lowell Braxton: Yes.

JR Nelson: Don't we need a second before we discuss it?

Lowell Braxton: That's normally the way it should proceed, yes.

Jim Catlin: This is Jim Catlin. I'd like to second the proposal.

Lowell Braxton: All right we - it's been moved and seconded. How does the RAC want to proceed?

May I ask for those in favor?

Man: Do we need to do a roll call vote again?

Lowell Braxton: Sherry are you going to handle that?

Sherry Foot: I will handle that. One - okay.

Man: Okay. Lowell before we vote could we get some clarification from staff about the fees and whether it would be - how difficult it would be to make a modification that required people to put a little bit more money upfront but still made allowances for small trips so you didn't - I mean because I'm not suggesting that you increase the charge for small trips.

But I just wonder is that something that's possible and should we maybe be considering that as part of a motion as well?

Steve Burr: This is Steve Burr. So just thinking real quickly so this \$150 has been proposed.

Could that be charged and say it ends up one individual or two individuals go down the river, they would get a refund. In other words they're just paying \$25 for one person and \$25 for another. The \$150 if I do my math correctly, let's see, \$25 and the \$150 is...

Woman: Six.

Steve Burr: Six individuals would be covered but parties would still be able to add additional individuals on for \$25 up until a certain date even the day before, right?

Man: That's correct.

Steve Burr: And that. I mean I like the gentleman from Las Vegas, his comments and let's see Juan as you put it, it's like having a little more skin in the game.

Juan Palma: There still could be cancellations though, right, up to the date and there is a refund.

Woman: Currently we have a no refund policy.

Steve Burr: No. It's no refund. Yes.

Woman: And the way it will be is that 21 days it will lock down so anything they've paid for up to 21 days there can be no refund of that money but the final payment needs to be made by the seventh, seven days in advance of their launch.

Woman: But we're - oh we're now talking I think 30 days.

Woman: Yes.

Woman: Not the 21.

Man: Thirty.

Amy Adams: This is Amy. We have no problem going back to a 30 day. My thoughts were do the lottery through recreation.gov. Have them confirm their launch for one person, final payment for all people paid 30 days in advance. But we could allow them to add more people because we don't want to lose that revenue.

But no refund, I would say no refunds at all through the whole thing. But that's me.

Brian Merrill: Amy do you have a - do you know what the average group size is for a private?

Amy Adams: I do. On the private side they average about nine people per launch.

Brian Merrill: So if we set it at six you would be - I'm trying to figure out how much of a hassle the refunding process would be. You know how many groups you have that go that are less than six for example. I don't know but with the average being...

Amy Adams: Yes. It can be set up. It is set up through recreation.gov right now. If we went with the way it was set up there would be refunds up to that 21 day point.

So it wouldn't be hard to do the refund.

John Harja: Is that a refund for the whole thing or a refund for partial payment?

Amy Adams: They could - right now it is set up so they could do the whole thing.

Woman: Twenty-one.

John Harja: Or specifically...

Amy Adams: (All) \$25 per person could be refunded up to 21 days for...

Man: (Unintelligible).

John Harja: So but specifically the suggestion is \$150. That's six people. So if you go with less than six people, who do you seek a refund from?

Amy Adams: It would be through recreation.gov.

John Harja: And it would just be you just get online and say now I'm only going to go with two people so I get a refund or what?

Amy Adams: (Sherry)?

Man: I was hoping the system would be smart enough at the beginning that you could tell it I'm only going with two people and in that case instead of charging you \$150 it only charges you \$50.

John Harja: That would make more sense. Yes.

Man: Well I think...

Amy Adams: It could be set that way. Well it can be set any way we want.

(Sherry Hughes): Right. This is (Sherry Hughes). You know the program dictates how the fees are set up and how the refunds are set up and all that kind of stuff.

We - you know we didn't - I didn't tell Amy that she had to do anything different. I suggested the 21 days because I thought it might work for them. Because one of the things that I hear all the time is you guys are all over the board with your policy and your refunds and your cancellations.

And if there's ever an opportunity to consolidate and be consistent with some of that, you know, try to take that opportunity.

But if it's not going to work for you guys then we won't, you know, Amy does not have and the program does not have to go with it. We set these up just the way the program actually wants them set up.

So I do kind of talk to folks about some of the things that happened like the one person trips and what are some of the glitches that people have a hard time foreseeing into the future because I've worked in the river permit business for almost 30 years so I know some of that stuff and how it actually - how people move through systems.

And especially computer systems and how to set them up so that they're functional for both sides, for both the public, the customer and also for, you know, the folks who are trying to get the best most efficient system on the agency side.

So if you guys want to, you know, set down, you know, no refunds or minimum amount, you know, all Amy has to do is let us know. You know for this system we'll need to know soon because it is supposed to go live December 1st. And some of that stuff will have to be reprogrammed if it's different than the original program that we set up. So that would be the only recommendation I would make.

But, you know, we did this and I was the first one to tell Amy to hang onto Plan B which is just exactly what you guys are saying, you know, what if something should happen to rec.gov. I always have a Plan B. I had a Plan B when I was a river manager and I still have a Plan B for everything. So, you know, that's the world we live in.

Jim Catlin: Well this is Jim Catlin. I think we ought to go with the simpler approach and then maybe ask the BLM staff to come back in a year and tell us how it went. Give us a report and if it looks like we need to address some of the things that we're worried about now came to be, we can again revisit this and make changes.

What do you think of that idea?

Lowell Braxton: Well we've got a motion before us that's been seconded. Do we have to deal with that or are we going to entertain the substitute motion?

JR Nelson: I think we should move forward. This is JR Nelson. I think we should move forward with the motion and the second the way it is. And we could revisit

this in a year or two without making it be a motion or part of the motion.  
Something we could put on an agenda for a later meeting.

Lowell Braxton: I see the benefit of that. And we've gone public now. And I think we merely have to respond to what we've published in the register. Don't we?

Sherry Foot: Yes, we do.

Carl Albrecht: Could someone restate the motion? This is Carl Albrecht. With the changes that have been made.

Man: I don't think we changed (anything).

Man: I don't think there have been any changes made. It's the original motion and second I believe.

Man: Well that was all discussion.

John Harja: But the original motion was to move to 30 days instead of 21.

Man: Exactly.

Man: Yes.

Sherry Foot: And accept the proposal...

Man: And otherwise (approve it).

Sherry Foot: ...as is with the exception of moving the cancellation back to 30 days from 21.

Man: Okay.

Lowell Braxton: Is everybody clear on that now?

(Jeff Johnson): I'm sorry. This is - again this is (Jeff Johnson) coming from the public. And if I'm out of order you can tell me but (unintelligible)...

Lowell Braxton: No. I think we're into deliberation point right now. Somebody else correct me if I'm off base.

Woman: (Go ahead).

Man: Motion on the floor.

Lowell Braxton: Well are we ready to vote on this right now RAC members?

Man: Yes.

Woman: It might be (unintelligible).

Sherry Foot: Okay.

Lowell Braxton: Sherry can you do the roll call?

Sherry Foot: I will do that. Okay, we'll - the proposal, excuse the motion was to approve the proposal as written with the exception of moving the cancellation portion from 30 days, excuse me, back to 30 days from the 21 days.

Everyone has approved.

Lowell Braxton: Well I would say the ayes have carried in this case. Am I correct in assuming that?

Man: Yes.

Sherry Foot: You are.

Lowell Braxton: Is there other discussion in this matter right now?

Juan Palma: Lowell this is Juan Palma. The only comment that I have is that it sound like the motion carried.

But I'm hearing a good advice from the RAC that we come back in one year and present some data and information to the RAC, how did it go, what did we learn. You know and given the advice and input that we received from you today, keep good data, good information, come back and report to you.

And then at that point in time we may make some adjustments given that data and information. That's kind of what I heard beyond the motion as part of the conversation.

Lowell Braxton: You're exactly right Juan. I agree with you and I support that direction.

Juan Palma: Okay. We'll do that. Thank you.

Woman: (Unintelligible).

Lowell Braxton: Sherry back to you. Where are we on the agenda?



Sherry Foot: Okay. The last thing that I wanted to share before we set up our next meeting date and location is that I want to thank you for participating on the call, all the guests.

And again this call was recorded. And after I receive the transcript I will be placing the notes on the web.

And so with that we'll just set up our next meeting date and location and possible subject matter.

Lowell Braxton: Well having heard that I throw it back to you Juan. Do you have suggestions as to things that we want to put on the agenda and do you have a proposed time that works for you?

Juan Palma: Yes. In terms of topics that I would like RAC to help me with, one of those are really (sage gross). It's a really critical topic. We are in the midst of that important conversation. And so that's one that I'd would propose to Lowell and the RAC members.

The second topic is that we have some planning going on both in St. George as well as Cedar City (RMP). Those are really critical documents that set a foundation for what we do in some of those areas, St. George and Cedar City. And so that'd be another topic that I would like for you to take a look at.

Third item that I think is important to me that I would like your advice and counsel on is that we're putting together right now in a draft form a strategic plan for you, BLM for our National Landscape Conservation System Land. That is like the monument. Grand Staircase Monument.

But many of the other areas like WSA areas. And I think that before we finish that strategic document that will go over to the Washington Office, I think RAC got to weigh-in on that document and (unintelligible).

So we'd like to share that draft strategy. That's our third topic Lowell that I think your advice and counsel from the RAC would be most valuable to me.

Those are just a few of the examples that I think we could build an agenda around and again allow our self some quality time.

But that last item that I mentioned is really important. So National Landscape Conservation System Lands include more than the monument. You know include wild scenic rivers, they include trails. And trails is really important right now.

So I think this is a broad topic that we need to talk about especially when we just concluded our All Spanish Trail analysis and homework. So I think that if we cover that broad NLCS for an acronym that will be really important. We can - we have the document. We just need to - we haven't gotten further than just have a draft internally.

Lowell Braxton: So that would be a briefing to the RAC with comments back to you from the RAC. We're not making a binding decision at that time. Is that correct?

Juan Palma: Right. You may give me some advice and counsel how we may amend that current strategy given your knowledge and information that you have.

Juan Palma: In terms of the date that I might suggest is that perhaps late January and/or early February might be possible date. Possible location might be at St. George where it's a little warmer. But certainly that would also work in Salt Lake City, Utah.

But I was thinking Lowell sometime late January after the holidays are over and people got back onto their schedule. So sometime late January and/or early February depending on your schedules. That would be a possibility of where we can do it.

And we always try to tie in a field tour so that's another possibility as well.

What's the pleasure of the RAC in terms of those possible dates?

Lowell Braxton: It's broad enough for me that I think I can accommodate that. I can't speak for anybody else.

Brian Merrill: Yes. Brian Merrill here. That - those dates would - I'm sure I could fit them in.

Juan I did have a question about, you know, this new - the proposal that's being fluttered out there for a monument surrounding Canyonland's National Park which are - a lot of the lands you're talking about are BLM lands. Is there any - is there a need to discuss anything with regard to that yet or is it too early or is that part of the NCLS discussion that you were proposing?

Juan Palma: Yes, it - that proposal is not a BLM proposal but it is a citizen proposal and so...

Brian Merrill: Right.

Juan Palma: ...my knowledge and limited knowledge of that proposal is just that limited because it's not something that we put together.

But it can certainly be part of the conversation. I think the broader conversation Brian is that some counties do have some proposal for Canyonland bills which is kind of similar to what you're discussing there.

But not necessarily Canyonland proposal. But it certainly could be part of that broader conversation of NCLS.

JR Nelson: This is JR Nelson of Emery County. We do view this as a public citizen proposal. I don't believe it's a BLM issue at all.

Emery County has some very strong views concerning this. We have a public land bill that we'd like to move forward.

It could be discussed but I don't really believe it's a BLM issue right now that needs, you know, RAC input but it certainly could be an item for discussion.

Juan Palma: Yes. Yes, so yes, definitely we could visit about all those topics. But the current question Brian that you pose is exactly like Jim mentioned. It's not a current proposal from the BLM.

Brian Merrill: Okay.

JR Nelson: I think we do the three things that you suggested Juan and we talk about the fourth one at lunch.

Brian Merrill: Yes.

Steve Burr: Well that - this is Steve Burr again. I mean that could be an additional topic because some counties are engaging in land use planning. I know Emery is and of course there's this House Bill 176 now where the state legislature needs to review that.

But that may be another topic with respect to the BLM's involvement with counties in land use planning. Because you're probably a more significant player than a Park Service or Forest Service of some counties.

Juan Palma: Yes. And also we have to walk a very tight rope in terms of our involvement at the local level as it relates to congressional action which sometimes, you know, those proposals are really subject to Congress making them happen.

And so our premature involvement could be a tight rope we have to walk. But nonetheless, you know, open of the things we want to provide to those counties (that work) that - a good service in terms of maps and information that they request of us. We certainly provide that to them.

So our engagement now seems to be in good - being good responsive questions that the counties may have so they put these proposals together.

But in terms of having a position from the BLM, you know, we cannot have one until the Congress has one.

JR Nelson: This is JR Nelson at Emery County again. We could even make a report on what's taking place with public land issues but I do understand that BLM

really cannot become politically involved in this. You know we can show some advantages to BLM.

But I believe it's a political issue and really not a BLM issue per se.

Sherry thanked everyone their participation on the call. The information will be relayed to the Price Office and taken care of as quickly as possible because December the 1st is coming faster than we think.

END

Concur: \_\_\_\_\_/s/ Lowell Braxton\_\_\_\_\_  
Lowell Braxton, Chairman

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_12/20/12\_\_\_\_\_